

AFRICAN COLONIZATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY,

JANUARY 21st, 1879,

BY

Rt. Rev. M. A. DeWolfe Howe, D.D., LL.D.,

Bishop of Central Pennsylvania.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

WASHINGTON, CITY :
COLONIZATION BUILDING, 450 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE.
1879.

CAGE

E448

.H68

1879

ADDRESS.

No thoughtful American can withhold the acknowledgment that there is due to people of African descent, in this country, the best that can be done for their welfare and happiness. Their ancestors did not, like those of European stock, come here as colonists of their own accord to find new homes, and achieve a higher destiny. They were the victims of a policy then common to the civilized world. France, Spain and England drew from the shores of Africa unwilling servants to toil for them in their colonial possessions. And so, all along our Atlantic border, the children of Ham, were, before we became a nation, "hewers of wood and drawers of water,"—menials in house and field to other families of the human race.

In the progress of human events, their descendants, now numbered by millions, are here no longer in involuntary servitude. All legal impediments to their advancement are removed. They are now free to aspire after any social or civil position to which their intelligence, education, and moral worth may entitle them. They may amass wealth, wield influence, hold office, like any other citizens. And individuals of their race have achieved such distinction among us. I think there are very few who are offended by these examples of men who have struggled up from the general abasement of their people, disarmed prejudice, and fairly secured positions of prominence and respect. Enthusiasts, who once espoused their cause when all this was impossible, and who have visions of the future of the race which, I apprehend, can never be realized on this continent, say,—why not let them remain where they are, on their native soil, and work out the problem of life, under the advantages which now are accorded to them by the amended Constitution?

Doubtless, the great mass of them will continue; and get, and hold possession of all the titular rights which belong to American citizens. The removal of 5,000,000 of people across the ocean is too vast an enterprise to be seriously considered; most of them will abide where Providence, favoring or adverse, has fixed their lot. Yet it will be a new chapter in human history if with all the inherent difficulties of their position—difficulties which no change in the laws of the land can possibly annul—they can attain to the same level of social, commercial, and civil progression to which a dominant race of overshadowing numbers has long ago risen. And this perpetual inferiority will not be in any great degree attributable to the prejudice which persists in looking down upon a people who have once been in bondage. It is equally true that the Indian,—civilize him as much as you will,—and the Mongolian,—in whatever swarms he may come to our shores—can never compete on the same arena with the race that for a thousand years has been in the van of human progress, and has the advantage of prepossession of education, property and power. And so, the African, impeded by his condition and history in this country, and crowded off from the track of progress by competitors of traditional precedence and overwhelming numbers, will, save in a few exceptional cases, earn a precarious livelihood by the sweat of his brow, hated and spurned by the laborers of another race who dig and delve at his side.

The more intelligent and aspiring of African stock have a far more inviting field of enterprise open before them on their ancestral shores. A free Colony, which has now risen to the dignity of an independent Republic, and which has been planted long enough to demonstrate that it has in it the elements of permanency and progression, offers them an unstinted share in its noble mission, and in its exalted destiny. *There* is an unencumbered field in which they may seek advancement in all that man esteems honorable without encountering invidious rivalry or universal and indomitable prejudice. Here, at a disadvantage, because their civilization is inferior to that which surrounds and overshadows them,—thither they can carry a degree of moral and mental enlightenment which shall entitle them at once to social respect, and incite them to strive for the prizes of fortune and the honors of office.

For, most of the colonists who have already found a home in Liberia immigrated under far less favorable circumstances than theirs who now,

and hereafter, may embark on the same great life enterprise. They went in comparative ignorance, just released from the tutelage of servitude, and invested with the terrible responsibilities of liberty in a strange land. These have been for half a generation in the hard school of self-dependence—introduced by philanthropists to the rudiments of book-learning, and through freedom have regained the consciousness, and are fired with the ambitions of manhood. They can contribute to the common stock of society there more of the ingredients which constitute national strength, prosperity, and honor, than their predecessors could afford.

The pioneers have broken up the waste and made it ready, and have, beaten back the savages that would drive them from the strand;—now is the time; and here are the men qualified by a special Providence to go in with the winnowed grain of a higher civilization, to “possess the land which the Lord sware unto their fathers.”

The time for colonization has not passed by:—“the fulness” of it has just come. The tokens of this fact are found both here and in Africa. The experiment of political equality, now tried among us for nearly a score of years has not shown that all distinctions of race are or will be forgotten. Centuries cannot efface even the factitious lines of demarkation between the races, which a century of untoward relations has produced, and deeply scored. Nature forbids them to blend; and history pronounces that they cannot stand side by side on the same plane of elevation.

On the other hand, Africa was never so attractive as now. The American Colony, to which this Society has sent out more than 15,000 settlers is more prosperous than ever. It is recognized in the family of Nations. Its productions and exports are increasing year by year. Its intercourse with the more intelligent tribes of the interior is constantly widening and becoming more profitable. Its schools and other institutions for the advancement of the people; its laws and administration of government, are growing more efficient and better adapted to their needs. It has had no inconsiderable share in the suppression of the slave trade, which is now denounced by all civilized nations, and by the vigilance of their navies is almost banished from the seas. Just considered as a home for the colored race, where there are none to jostle them out of the way of progress—no impediment of law or

prejudice, or preoccupation on the arena of manly effort, where succeeding generations may reasonably hope to surpass their fathers in all that ennobles man and makes his life a joy to himself and a blessing to others, Liberia is, I believe, the most inviting spot on the habitable earth!

But, regarding the Colony on the Coast of Africa, planted, enlarged, cultivated, and defended by colored emigrants from the United States, as a theatre on which men of the same race can most hopefully exercise and develop the manhood that is in them, we do not half appreciate its advantages, if we think of it as a mere isolated community, bounded by the geographical limits, defined in the treaties with the barbarous tribes that compass it about; it is the gate of entrance to interior Africa. And, what interior Africa is we are only beginning to know. The researches of Barth and Livingstone, and our own Stanley, reveal to us that it is swarming with intelligent people, far superior to the tribes which on the sea coast have been debased by incessant wars, waged for the capture of prisoners to be sold to the slave-traders; that the population of the Continent is estimated at two hundred millions; that it is rich in arable lands and precious minerals; that navigable lakes and rivers traverse the interior, and that only civilization and enterprise (which are familiar to us, so that the products of them seem to us natural elements like fire and water), are required to introduce steamboats and railroads, and telegraphs. Then those vast resources which have been "hidden from ages and generations" shall be brought out and mingled with the commerce of the world, and the millions that now "sit in darkness" shall learn to live like men, and to die in hope of immortality!

Among the first colonies of historic times were those planted by the Phenicians on the Northern shores of Africa, where France, nominally Christian, and thoroughly tolerant, has now her Colony of Algeria. England has unfurled her Red-cross banner at Sierra Leone on the West, at Cape Colony and Natal on the South, and Zanzibar on the East; and America has her watch-tower also in the cordon of Christian civilization which almost girts the Continent. The circumvallation about the stronghold of ignorance and degradation is well-nigh complete. Why do not these allied hosts interchange the signal of onset, and rise up, and go in, and possess the land for humanity, and for God? Nay, why

have not the civilization and enterprise of Europe, and America long since penetrated "the dark Continent," and brought its people, and its products into contact with the commerce of mankind? I answer;—first, because the reports of proceedings on the Coasts have made the tribes of the interior afraid to deal with the pale-faced and ruthless invaders from beyond the sea; second, because the climatic influences of the region have been regarded as fatal to the white race; and finally, because hitherto there have been no representatives of their own branch of the human family who in sufficient numbers have been uplifted by the civilization which they have rather seen than shared in other lands, and made willing to return to Africa, and there to do or to suffer for the regeneration of their "brethren after the flesh." When the Colonies of America and Great Britain, shall have trained or drawn to themselves from lands where they were once in bondage, and always in subserviency, Negro men of lofty hopes, and generous impulses, and practical education, and daring enterprise—then Central Africa will be reached by missionaries of civilization and religion; its resources will be developed, and circulated; its people will thrill with the sense of a new and higher life; and the story of its estrangement from the great family of nations will pass away. I pity the man of the swarthy skin, who, entrusted with the clues of liberty and education, has no ambition to follow them when they lead out of darkness and doubt to such a destiny,—to possibilities of good for himself and his progeny, nowhere else to be enjoyed!

In the distribution of the human race, the sons of Ham were assigned to Africa; to its peculiarities of food and climate their constitutions are accommodated. A century of life in other climes has not obliterated this natural adaptation. Experiment has proved that colored emigrants from America survive and flourish where men of another race lose vigor, sicken and die. They are the elected redeemers of their Father Land. It waits their coming:—it sent them forth with tears; it will receive them again with joy!

This Society, which once was impugned as an agent of domestic agitation, and again traduced as the enemy of the blacks, has in all time numbered among its supporters many of the distinguished divines, patriots and statesmen of our country. Its beneficent errand and work is, to aid worthy colored persons of either sex, and in any vigorous stage of life, who may desire to seek a home on the shores of that fruitful and

pleasant Continent from which their fathers were torn away; to help them in their outfit, and to secure them a freehold on their arrival.

It is a noble, and far-reaching charity, conferring a blessing not only on its immediate recipients, but on their children and children's children, "even to the years of many generations;"—not only on these, but by them replenishing that well-spring of life and hope, in the desert, the overflow of whose waters will refresh, and gladden the waste places that lie beyond. And again, the civilization which through this medium shall reach at length to the waiting myriads in Central Africa will give back a reflected light to the source of its emanation, and the entire world will be brighter and happier when there shall no longer be a dark and dreary spot on all its habitable compass.

I stood lately in Westminster Abbey, that Mausoleum of the mighty dead, at the spot where rest the weary feet of the great English Explorer, by whose adventurous journeys the world has learned so much of the "secret places" of the earth; and on Livingstone's monument which overhangs the place of his repose, I read the record of his prayer offered in loneliness in the wilds of Central Africa; and here I repeat it as my own in this place of concourse, "May Heaven's richest blessing come down on every one, American, English or Turk, who helps to heal the open sore of the world, Amen."

